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Shawneetown, Illinois: The early years

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SHAWNEETOWN, ILLINOIS:
THE EARLY YEARS

CAMPBELL

SHAWNEETOWN, ILLINOIS: THE EARLY YEARS

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William E. Campbell

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INTRODUCTION

In 1964 the Illinois Division of Highways and the State Historical Society erected two markers on Route 13 near Shawneetown. Inscribed on these signs are short descriptions of the town and its history. Unfortunately, brief notations such as these are typical of the attention which has been devoted to the history of one of the oldest settlements in Illinois and the only community in the United States, except Washington, D. C., which was surveyed and platted by the federal government. This paper, a study of Shawneetown's early intellectual, economic, and political life, has been generally restricted to events occurring through the year 1825, a milestone in the town's history.

CHAPTER I

GENESIS OF A SETTLEMENT

Shawneetown, as its name indicates, first existed as an Indian village. An early record of this fact is found in the June 6, 1765, entry in the journals of George Croghan, a British Indian agent, who mentions the "Old Shawnesse Village" on the Ohio River, "some of that nation having formerly lived there." The Shawnees, who probably settled in the area because of the salt springs on the Saline River, had lived in the Carolinas until about 1730, when they migrated to the territory northwest of the Ohio.[1] Further commentary on the Indians is supplied by Christian Schultz, a traveler, who, in a letter written October 8, 1807, remarks that Shawneetown was at that time "wholly abandoned by its ancient proprietors, and only occasionally visited by a few of them for the purpose of trading with five or six white families."[2] In 1802, the first white man, a gunsmith named Michael Sprinkle, settled in Shawneetown and became popular with the

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[1] George Croghan, Letters and Journals Relating to Tours into the Western Country--November 16, 1750-November, 1765, reprinted in Vol. I of Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), pp. 137-38.

[2] Christian Schultz, Travels on an Inland Voyage . . . (New York: Isaac Riley, 1810), I, 199.

Indians, remaining with them in order to repair their guns; however, Sprinkle's residence was illegal according to a law of March 3, 1799, which banned whites from Indian lands. Nevertheless, the Shawnees acquired permission from William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory and superintendent of Indian affairs, for the gunsmith to stay with the tribe, and soon another white man, a Frenchman named La Boissiere, settled in Shawneetown, where he traded with the Indians, fished, and operated an "humble ferry."[3]

Immigration to the area was spurred by the federal government's purchase in 1803 of the Saline River salt springs and the adjacent lands from the Indians.[4] Located approximately twelve miles northwest of Shawneetown, the Ohio (Wabash) Salines at Nigger Spring and at Half Moon Lick were first worked by the Indians and later by the French and English.[5] After building a blockhouse near the present site of

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[3]John Reynolds, My Own Times, Embracing Also, the History of My Life (Belleville: B. H. Perryman & H. L. Davison, Printers, 1855), p. 75. Richard Peters (ed.), The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, from the Organization of the Government in 1789, to March 3, 1845. . . . (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1861), I, 743-49.

[4]Reynolds, 75.

[5]J. M. Peck, A Gazetteer of Illinois . . . (Jacksonville: R. Goudy, 1834), p. 285. Evarts Boutell Greene and Clarence Walworth Alvord (eds.), Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. IV: The Governors' Letter-Books, 1818-1834 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1909), p. 3.

Equality, Illinois, the French occupied the salines so "the Royal subjects of His Majesty King Louis XIV might have a regular supply" of salt, but in 1735 the Shawnees drove out the French and destroyed the blockhouse.[6] The federal purchase was authorized by Congress in an act of March 3, 1803, which also appropriated $3,000 for the enrichment of the Indians. This action prefaced a treaty signed with the Delaware, Shawnee, Pottawatomie, Eel River, Wea, Kickapoo, and Piankasaw Tribes June 7, 1803, at Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Indians ceded to the government the salines and all land within four miles of them, and in return the tribes were to receive up to 150 bushels of salt annually.[7] Since the salt derived from the salines eventually sold for as much as $10 per bushel, the government received a handsome return on an investment, the cost of which did not even equal the Congressional appropriation. Shortly after the transaction was completed, the springs and the surrounding property were leased for three years to a Captain Bell of Lexington, Kentucky, whose extraction of both salt and money was observed by Christian Schultz:

> Considerable quantities of salt are made at the aforementioned Creek [the Saline River], and of very good quality. The springs belong to the government and are leased out to certain contractors, who are bound not to sell the salt

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[6] William H. Nicholas, "Shawneetown Forsakes the Ohio," The National Geographic Magazine, XCIII (February, 1948), 273.

[7] H. L. Ellsworth, Illinois in 1837; . . . (Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell and Grigg & Elliot, 1837), p. 78.

> higher than half a dollar a bushel at the works. These, therefore, have their private copartners who buy all at the lawful price; and as the property has then apparently changed owners, they sell none at the storehouse for less than ten dollars a bushel.[8]

The basic utensils for the salt-making process were large iron evaporating kettles which held forty-five to ninety gallons of water each. After being floated down the Ohio from Pittsburgh, the kettles were placed over long trenches dug in the ground, and Negroes tended the evaporating fires beneath the cauldrons. As timber near the wells was cut, the salt producers moved the kettles into the forests and built a crude, but effective, gravity pipe line of timbers ten to sixteen inches in diameter and twelve to twenty feet long. Two-inch augur holes were bored through the logs, and the butt end of one log was forced into the tapered end of another. Iron bands prevented the ends from splitting, and the brine from the wells was conveyed to the kettles three to four miles away in the forests.[9] One hundred twenty-five to 228 gallons of water yielded one bushel (50 pounds) of salt, and as many as 2,000 workers were needed to produce 80 to 100 bushels per day.[10] Unfortunately, the saline operations contributed to the

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[8] Greene and Alvord, 3. Schultz, I, 199.

[9] Nicholas, 276.

[10] Greene and Alvord, 3.

extinction of the passenger pigeon, for, as naturalist John James Audubon noted in 1813, the laborers were also kept busy killing the birds as they attempted to drink water from the pipes.[11]

Labor for the salines was furnished by Negroes, who, although usually referred to as indentured servants, were slaves imported from Kentucky and Tennessee.[12] In spite of the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, General Arthur St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory, ruled that any further extension of slavery in Illinois after 1787 was prohibited, but that slaves already held and their descendants could be retained, a judgment which was based upon a clause in the ordinance which banned slavery, "saving however to the french and canadian /sic/ inhabitants & other settlers of the Kaskaskies, Saint Vincents /Vincennes/ and the neighbouring villages, who have heretofore professed themselves citizens of Virginia, their laws and customs now in force among them relative to the descent & conveyance of property." Slavery had existed with little French or English governmental interference since 1722, when Philip Renault unloaded a cargo of 500 West Indian slaves near Fort Chartres.[13]

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[11] Nicholas, 274.

[12] History of Gallatin, Saline, Hamilton, Franklin and Williamson Counties, Illinois (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887), p. 20.

[13] N. Dwight Harris, The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois and of the Slavery Agitation in That State, 1719-1864 (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1904), pp. 1-6. United States, Ordinance of July 13, 1787.

CHAPTER II

LAND FEVER

Despite its negative aspects of slavery and the wholesale slaughter of wildlife, the salt industry contributed immeasurably to the physical and economic growth of Shawneetown. According to the United States Census of 1810, the rude Ohio River settlement contained a total of 830 persons, a sizeable number for a frontier town in the Illinois Territory.[1] Shawneetown's importance as a population center had been recognized as early as 1806, when a mail route was opened between the village and Vincennes, Indiana. This route was the second in Illinois, the first opening in 1805 from Vincennes to Cahokia.[2] Shawneetown and its prosperity in 1808 are described by Fortescue Cuming, an English traveler:

> This /Shawneetown/ was formerly an Indian settlement, the only vestiges of which now remaining, are two barrows for interment at the upper end, and a growth of young trees all around the town, which evince that the land has been cleared, at no great distance of time back. The town now contains about twenty-four cabins, and is a place

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[1] United States, Bureau of the Census, Third Census of the United States: 1810, p. 87.

[2] Franklin William Scott, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. VI: Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 1814-1879 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1910), p. xxvii.

> of considerable resort on account of the saline salt-works about twelve miles distant, which supply with salt all the settlements within one hundred miles, and I believe even the whole of Upper Louisiana.
>
> The United States' [sic] general government having reserve to itself the property of the scite [sic] of this town, the salt licks, and all the intermediate tract from Saline river, the inhabitants have no other tenure than the permission of the governour of the territory to reside there during his pleasure, so they make no comfortable improvements, although they appear to be in a very prosperous condition from their trade; so much so, that they say, that it would immediately become one of the most considerable towns on the river, if they could purchase lots in fee simple.--There were several trading boats at the landing, and more appearance of business than I had seen on this side Pittsburgh.[3]

The development of the town was further aided by the federal government when Congress approved April 30, 1810, "An Act Providing for the Sale of Certain Lands in the Indiana Territory, and for Other Purposes." Section six of this statute directed the surveyor general to plot the settlement and provided that no town lot (in-lot) was to be sold for less than $8. No out-lot was to sell for less than $5 per acre.[4] As explained in a letter of October 31, 1807, from

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[3]Fortescue Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, through the States of Ohio and Kentucky; a Voyage down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and a Trip through the Mississippi Territory, and Part of West Florida. . . . , reprinted in Vol. IV of Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), pp. 270-71.

[4]Peters, II, 590-91.

Jared Mansfield, surveyor general, to Albert Gallatin, secretary of the treasury, Shawneetown acquired the unusual distinction of being federally plotted because of the village's proximity to the salines and the settlers' fear of losing their property:

> The Spot [Shawneetown] is said to be admirally [sic] fitted for a Town, & the country immediately About it is represented as excellent, & particularly Valuable on Account of its Vicinity to the Salt Licks. The people are anxious, that the U. States lay off a town on this Site, & that the lots be offered for Sale, in order that individuals may have a prospect of Obtaining them; & the public have the Advantage of the profits arising from the Sale. If this be not done, Speculating persons will undoubtedly purchase the Whole tract, at the Ordinary price, & exact exorbitant sums of the people for the town lots, to the great disadvantage of them and the public. I think it of importance, that, this spot be either reserved or laid out into Town Lots.[5]

Although Congress approved the survey and authorized a subsequent auction of lots, the settlers' alarm was not abated, since none of their land claims had been recognized. Fearing dispossession by "some monopolizing company" and the loss of their land improvements, the citizens of Shawneetown petitioned Congress for either the privilege of purchasing lots at the usual price or payment of the cost of their improvements.[6] The petitioners also requested the establishment of a

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[5] Clarence Edwin Carter (ed.), The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. VII: The Territory of Indiana, 1800-1810 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 488.

[6] Beverley W. Bond, Jr., The Civilization of the Old Northwest: A Study of Political, Social, and Economic Development, 1788-1812 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), pp. 90-91.

land office in Shawneetown for reasons such as those found in the February 23, 1811, petition of George Robinson, et al:

> To the Congress of the United States, The Petition of George Robison [sic] in behalf of himself & the Inhabitants of Shawneetown & its Vicinity in the Illinois Territory Most respectfully Represents that the Country on & Near the Ohio & Wabash rivers is Surveyed & ready for sale, That there are many Setlers [sic] on said Lands who wish to purchase, they have also many friends in the States Easterly & Southerly of the Said Territory who wish to become purchasers of the public lands in that part of the Said Territory--That There is but one land office in the Indiana Territory which is at Kaskaskias many hundred miles from some parts of those lands which are to be offerd [sic] for sale, That there is a Wilderness of very considerable extent between the whole of the said Country & Kaskaskias, which will long remain such for want of Wood & Water--That great Inconvenience will attend the Setlers [sic] aforesaid should they be oblidged [sic] to go to Kaskaskias to attend their Land business there. That this Circumstance will tend to discourage purchasers and very much retard the Settlement of the Country as well as the payments for land into the Treasury.
>
> That Congress haveing [sic] at their last session Established a Town where many of your petitioners live by ordering a portion of the public land to be Surveyed into small lots the price of one of which can not be as much as the Expence [sic] of going to Kaskaskias to pay for it--Your petitioners from these Considerations are induced to hope that Congress will see the Necessity of Establishing a land office at Shawnee town or some other place in the Illinois Territory near the Ohio River--for which as in duty bound we most respectfully pray . . .[7]

The settlers' wishes were granted, and a land office was created February 21, 1812, "for the sale of lands between the Kaskaskia and

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[7] Clarence Edwin Carter (ed.), The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XVI: The Territory of Illinois, 1809-1814 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 153-54.

Vincennes districts."[8] Besides establishing the land office, Congress passed a pre-emption act February 5, 1813, which gave each settler right to not more than a quarter-section tract which he had "actually inhabited and cultivated."[9] This law concerning Illinois land was, according to Payson Jackson Treat, "more satisfactory than . . . preceding measures" because it allowed a larger pre-emption.[10] A registrar and a receiver were commissioned by the General Land Office in Washington, D. C., and were appointed to supervise the land sales. Thomas Sloo was the registrar until June 8, 1829, and John Caldwell was the receiver until October 9, 1835. Shortly before the two officials began their work July 1, 1814, Congress approved another survey March 28, 1814, in "An Act Concerning Shawneetown," which said that two additional sections were to be laid off "in the rear of the town, extending it into the highlands." Although William Dobbins and William Harris, the surveyors, had not completed the second survey when the land office opened, Sloo and Caldwell nevertheless continued with their duties, and the first entry in the register was made July 7, 1814, by John Black for the northwest quarter of section 7, township 10 south, range 9 east in Gallatin County.[11] When the

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[8] Payson Jackson Treat, The National Land System, 1785-1820 (New York: E. B. Treat & Company, Publishers, 1910), p. 173.

[9] Peters, II, 797.

[10] Treat, 384.

[11] History of Gallatin, Saline, Hamilton, Franklin and Williamson Counties, Illinois, 25, 111-12. Peters, III, 113. Carter, XVI, 406, 413, 421.

platting was concluded, the Shawneetown Land District contained 3,018,240 acres, and 8,837 acres were sold in 1814. Acreages sold in succeeding years were 51,735, 1815; 33,975, 1816; 67,084, 1817; 239,011, 1818; 161,654, 1819; 2,392, 1820; 3,329, 1821; 2,050, 1822; 1,253, 1823; 2,278, 1824; and 1,357, 1825.[12]

Despite the settlers' anxiety to secure their property, the rush to buy land was slowed by the flooding Ohio River in October, 1814. After the river crested at fifty-five feet and covered the town lots with twenty feet of water, several purchasers, their land fever broken, requested Congress to refund their money, saying:

> That your petitioners became purchasers to a large amount of lots in Shawneetown . . . at the public sales of said lots in the fall of 1814--at an excessive high price: That within a few months after the sales of the said lots, . . . the whole of the town on the River was inundated, the water being from 10 to 20 feet over the whole of that part of the town immediately on the River, and extending back about one mile to the foot of the Hills, a heighth [sic] entirely unknown to the oldest settlers of this part of the country. That alarmed and disheartened many persons have ceased to improve, and have abandoned the place, and others have been detered [sic] from settling here. . . .

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[12] Treat, 401. Solon Justus Buck, The Centennial History of Illinois, Introductory Volume: Illinois in 1818 (Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1917), pp. 49-50. Theodore Calvin Pease, The Centennial History of Illinois, Vol. II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848 (Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1918), p. 176.

> Your petitioners apprehend that if no relief is granted, three fourths of the lots purchased, with the one fourth already paid upon them, and the improvements will be forfeited to the Government, and the town sink even below its present diminished population;--and perhaps be abandoned for some other site offered at a lower rate by an individual.-- Your petitioners on examination find that the second payment has not been made on ten lots out of all those sold at the sales.--
>
> The premises considered your petitioners pray that you will relinquish to the purchasers of lots in Shawneetown, the three fourths of the purchase money that yet remains unpaid to the Government, and that you will grant such other & further relief in the premises as in your wisdom you shall deem right:-- And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray &c.

Unfortunately for the petitioners, Congress ignored their emotional pleas and took no action on their requests.[13] After the temporary lapse caused by the floods in 1814, land sales again declined after 1819 because of private selling and a shift in settlement to the northern part of the state.[14]

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[13]Nicholas, 279. Clarence Edwin Carter, The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XVII: The Territory of Illinois, 1814-1818 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 455-56.

[14]Pease, 5.

CHAPTER III

SOCIETY BECOMES COMPLEX

In addition to the land office, a second financial institution was established in Shawneetown in 1812, when John Marshall, a merchant and later a member of the State House of Representatives of 1819, opened the first bank in Illinois. It was on the ground floor of a two-story brick building which had been erected in 1808 and was the first brick structure in Shawneetown and the third in the state, the earliest being the Nicholas Jarrot Mansion in Cahokia, completed in 1806. Named the Marshall House, the bank building also contained the family store and living quarters. The bank's money was stored at night in a deep well which was covered by a trap door, with further "security" being provided by a guard who slept on the covering. Miraculously, the bank was never robbed.[1]

Although Shawneetown had attained some measure of economic and governmental eminence by 1812, the settlement's communication with the

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[1] George Washington Smith, A History of Southern Illinois: A Narrative Account of Its Historical Progress, Its People, and Its Principal Interests (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), I, 125. John Drury, Old Illinois Houses (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1948), pp. 10-11. Nicholas, 279.

rest of the territory was limited. Recognizing the need for internal improvements, the legislature appealed to Congress in December, 1812, for an appropriation to build a road from Shawneetown to the salt works and from there to Kaskaskia, thus linking the two most populous areas of Illinois. As required by a law of September 17, 1807, a court order in 1813 authorized the construction of the road from Shawneetown to the salines, and in April, 1816, Congress approved the surveying and building of the portion between the salt works and Kaskaskia. Eight thousand dollars was allotted to the project; however, in a March 14, 1819, message to the General Assembly, Governor Shadrach Bond stated that the appropriation was insufficient for the completion of the road because the major streams between Kaskaskia and the Big Muddy River had not been bridged. Bond said he doubted that Congress would grant an additional sum to finish the road. He also recommended "the propriety of passing a law authorising the building of toll bridges over such creeks and rivers by individuals," but the legislature decided this was a problem for the county commissioners.[2] Despite the lack of money, the highway eventually was completed and was known as the "Great Western Road."[3]

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[2] History of Gallatin, Saline, Hamilton, Franklin and Williamson Counties, 56. Francis S. Philbrick (ed.), Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. XXX: Pope's Digest, 1815 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1940), 346-48. Buck, 117-119.

[3] Arthur Clinton Boggess, The Settlement of Illinois, 1778-1830 ("Chicago Historical Society's Collection," Vol. V; Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1908), p. 157.

Besides roads, Shawneetown's major transportation facilities were river and ferry boats. Transportation and commerce on the Ohio depended at first upon the barge and keelboat. They were manned by professional boatmen, but only the latter was able both to ascend and to descend the river. The usual methods of navigation were rowing, cordelling, and poling, although Fortescue Cuming mentions a mode of propulsion which, regardless of his eyewitness account, resembles a contraption more mythical than real:

> A keel of forty tons came to the landing at the same time we did. She was worked by a horizontal wheel, kept in motion by six horses going round in a circle on a gallery above the boat, by which are turned two cog wheels fixed to an axle which projects over both gunwales of the boat, one before and the other behind the horizontal wheel. Eight paddles are fixed on the projecting end of each axle, which impel the boat about five or six miles an hour, so that she can be forced against the current about twenty miles a day.[4]

The advent of the steamboat speeded and increased transportation of both goods and passengers. Traveling at about ten miles per hour, a steamboat trip from New Orleans to Shawneetown took about one month. The passenger fare was approximately $110, and the freight rate was four and one-half hundredths of one cent to six hundredths of one cent per pound.[5]

Unlike the other river traffic, the ferries were regulated by

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[4]Cuming, 264.

[5]Boggess, 160.

the territorial, state, and county governments. For example, one of the laws of the territorial legislature was "An Act for the Relief of the Legal Representatives of Alexander Wilson, Deceased," which was approved November 28, 1814. Wilson had established a ferry on the Ohio River, and his "legal representatives" were empowered to operate it with all the privileges which had been accorded Wilson, subject to "all the rules, regulations and penalties to which ferries legally established by courts are subject."[6] Rates on all Ohio River ferries within the boundaries of Gallatin County from 1813 to 1824 were:

For each wagon and team of not more than four horses..	$1.25
For each wagon and team of not more than two horses...	.75
A man and horse.....	.25
Each horse, mule, or ass.....	.125
Each person (except children under seven).....	.125
Each head of meat cattle.....	.125
Each head of sheep, goats, and hogs.....	.0625[7]

Eventually the ferry business was linked with the purveyance of food, drink, and lodging when Moses M. Rawlings, proprietor of the Columbian Inn, leased the Corporation Ferry from the Shawneetown Board of Trustees in 1823. The ferry conveyed passengers across the river to Kentucky, where Henderson may have been the travelers' destination. Rawlings told his patrons they could expect to cross the Ohio undelayed,

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[6] Francis S. Philbrick (ed.), Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. XXV: The Laws of the Illinois Territory, 1809-1818 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1950), pp. 127-28.

[7] "Order Book A., 1813-1820," Gallatin County Clerk's Office, Shawneetown, Illinois," p. 150.

and that the Columbian Inn, a brick building overlooking the river, was, of course, prepared to receive customers.

During the earliest years of Shawneetown's existence life was uncomplicated and formality in government was unneeded; however, with the influx of settlers caused by land sales, the territorial legislature recognized the necessity of organization and legally established Shawneetown's government December 8, 1814, in "An Act Concerning the Town of Shawanoe Town." According to this law, Thomas E. Craig, George W. Frazer, John Marshall, Henry Oldham, and Joseph M. Street were appointed town trustees, their terms of office to run until the election of their successors. Resident owners of town lots were to elect five trustees annually the first Monday of November, and the Gallatin County sheriff was to post a twenty-day notice of the election on the courthouse door and to conduct the voting with the assistance of a clerk who was to be employed by the sheriff and to be paid by the trustees. Obviously, this method was hardly fraud-proof and provided an excellent opportunity for an unscrupulous frontier sheriff to hand out political favors.

Among the powers of the board of trustees was that of taxation. It was to appoint an assessor who was to evaluate all town lots and then to report his findings to the trustees. However, houses and other buildings were not to be assessed, perhaps because the legislature desired to encourage property improvement. After receiving the

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[8] Illinois Gazette, March 29, 1823, p. 1.

assessor's report, the trustees were to levy a yearly tax of not more than 2 per cent of the assessed evaluation. A collector was to be appointed to receive taxes, which were to pay for office expenses, street cleaning and repair, and any other necessary improvements. The collector was actually a tax farmer, since he was to be paid a salary equal to 6 per cent of what he received.[9]

In addition to its taxing powers, the board could pass laws to preserve order in the town, provided they did not violate the territorial statutes and the Northwest Ordinance. Municipal ordinances had to be posted in public places, and the trustees were required to file the town plat in the county recorder's office. The board was also responsible for marking the corners of house lots with stones or posts and for establishing a town cemetery.[10] The latter action was taken in 1818, after Major General Thomas Posey, a former United States senator from Louisiana and ex-governor of the Indiana Territory, died in Shawneetown at the house of Joseph Street, his son-in-law. Posey was buried in Street's garden, and this area then became the local burial ground, Westwood.[11]

The year 1812 also marked the beginning of Shawneetown's importance as a center of local government, for on September 14

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[9] Philbrick (Laws), 132-35.

[10] Ibid.

[11] John W. Allen, Legends and Lore of Southern Illinois (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1963), pp. 5-6. Nicholas, 284.

Ninian Edwards, governor of the Illinois Territory, created Gallatin County and proclaimed the Ohio River settlement the county seat. The town's privilege of being the "seat of justice" apparently was not contested by any other village in the area, since none was as large as Shawneetown. The county's name was intended to honor Albert Gallatin and was suggested to Edwards by John Bradolette, registrar of the Vincennes Land Office.[12] As a part of the Indiana Territory and during the first three years of the Illinois Territory, the town was in Randolph County. Earlier, while in the Northwest Territory, it was located in Knox County (see Appendix I).[13]

Shawneetown again received recognition from the territorial legislature when the lawmakers approved December 28, 1816, "An Act to Incorporate the President, Directors and Company of the Bank of Illinois." The bank, which had absorbed Marshall's institution, was established in Shawneetown because of the settlement's location in the midst of the wave of immigration from the South, although the town contained only about 500 inhabitants, a substantial drop from the 1810 figure of 830. This decline in population probably was cuased by the northward spread of settlement and dissatisfaction with flood conditions on the Ohio.

Resembling the Second Bank of the United States, the Bank of Illinois was chartered until 1837 and had no competition within the

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[12] History of Gallatin, Saline, Hamilton, Franklin and Williamson Counties, Illinois, 41.

[13] Illinois, Counties of Illinois: Their Origin and Evolution (Springfield: William H. Chamberlain, Secretary of State, n.d.), pp. 14-24.

territory until 1818, when the newly formed state authorized banks in Edwardsville and Kaskaskia. According to the charter of the Shawneetown bank, it was to have a capital of $300,000, one third of which was to be reserved for state subscription, the remainder to go to private investors. The bank was restricted in its handling of loans and deposits, and its interest rate on loans could not exceed 6 per cent per year. If the bank refused to redeem any of its notes in specie or declined to pay any of its depositors on demand, the depositor could receive his money later with interest of 12 per cent annually from the time the demand was made. The incorporating statute also fixed the value of a share of stock in the bank at $100. The bank was to be open for business when one tenth of the subscribed capital was acquired by David Apperson, Samuel R. Campbell, Samuel Hayes, John Marshall, and Leonard White, who were appointed by the legislature as the subscription committee. Dividends were to be paid semiannually to stockholders at rates ranging from 6 to 12 per cent. The bank's twelve directors were to be elected the first Monday of each year. When one tenth of the subscription was obtained, the institution opened July 1, 1817, in a log cabin, and soon afterward, William H. Crawford, secretary of the treasury, requested the Bank of the United States to designate it and other state banks "depositories of federal funds." This arrangement failed, but Crawford himself appointed the banks "agents of the treasury." Under an agreement effective February 1, 1819, the Bank of Illinois

received and deposited to the treasury's credit all current notes of banks which maintained cash payments. It also had the power to refuse any bank's notes after giving reasonable notice to the receiver.[14]

The establishment of the Bank of Illinois was greeted enthusiastically in Shawneetown because of the many benefits derived from it. It was the only bank within a large area, and many farmers and businessmen patronized it to borrow money, to pay for cargoes, and to receive proceeds from the sale of their commodities and merchandise. Those who desired to purchase federal land or to avoid forfeiture of their leases or claims could borrow bank funds.[15]

The Bank of Illinois also received payments on the saline leases, each of which sold for $10,000 annually.[16] The salines had been ceded to the state in 1818 with the stipulation that none of the property was to be leased to any one person for more than ten years.[17] Labor for the salt works was still provided by Negro slaves, who were allowed to remain at the salines under section two of article six of the Illinois Constitution of 1818, which said that slaves were to be permitted "within the tract reserved for the salt works near Shawneetown" for periods no longer than one year at any time; however,

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[14]George William Dowrie, The Development of Banking in Illinois, 1817-1863 ("University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences," Vol. II, No. 4; Urbana: University of Illinois, 1913), pp. 9-19. Philbrick (Laws), 239-46.

[15]Buck, 148-50.

[16]Ibid., 150. Ellsworth, 78.

[17]Peters, III, 430.

after 1825, slavery was to be abolished entirely.[18] The Constitution of 1818 was nominally antislavery, but it did not transform the indentured servant system into a pleasant voluntary work plan. Coercion of Negroes into renewing their indentures was easy, and the Southern-born residents of Gallatin County were hardly enlightened in their attitude toward slavery.[19] Indenture even produced a kind of slave trade, since "servants" often were transferred from one master to another. For example, in June, 1815, Silvey, a twenty-four-year-old Negro woman, was sold to John Morris of Gallatin County, who paid $400 for her in return for a pledge of service until June, 1855.[20]

The provisions of the Illinois Constitution also served as the foundation for a Black Code which was continually expanded by the General Assembly in order to curtail runaways and to restrict the activities of free Negroes. In March, 1819, the legislature approved a number of slave laws. For example, a slave could be freed only if his master posted a $1,000 bond and guaranteed that the slave would not become a public charge. If he failed to provide the bond, the master could be fined $200 for each slave released. The migration of free Negroes to Illinois was discouraged by a law requiring them to file papers proving their freedom with a circuit court clerk.[21]

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[18] Illinois, Constitution (1818), Art. 6, sec. 2.

[19] Harris, 23.

[20] Buck, 138-40.

[21] Illinois Revised Laws of 1833 (Vandalia: Greiner & Sherman, 1833), pp. 457-62.

The influence of the Black Code was frequently manifested in the Shawneetown Illinois Gazette, whose issues from 1819 to 1825 contained approximately twenty-four notices concerning escaped slaves. Among the advertising slaveholders was John Forrester of Shawneetown, who offered a $100 reward for the return of his slave, Dick, a runaway salt worker. In 1821, Moses Rawlings posted $25 for the capture of his servant, Tom, whom Rawlings hoped would be apprehended within the state. If Tom were seized outside Illinois, the reward was to be $35.[22] A typical advertisement for runaway slaves was inserted by Enos C. Tate of Moorsville, Alabama, in the March 9, 1822 edition of the Illinois Gazette:

> $50 Reward.
>
> Ran away from the Subscriber, about the 20th of October last,
>
> Three Negroes,
>
> To-wit:--One large Mulatto Fellow, named RICHARD, about thirty years of age, with very large whiskers, and thin hair on the crown of his head--had a rifle gun, and black slut /a female dog/, with some white in her face, also, lame in one shoulder. Also,--his wife, MILLY, a large bright mulatto woman, aged about 30 or 35, with straight hair, and tucks it on her head, her right foot has been burnt, and toes injured--They also took their daughter PHOEBE with them--she is a very bright mulatto, about nine years old, with blue eyes.
>
> I expect the above negroes are aiming for some of the free states, and perhaps have got a free pass, or may be conveyed off by some white persons--Any person apprehending and delivering them to me in Limestone county, Alabama, or in any jail in the United States, so

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[22] Illinois Gazette, February 24, 1820, p. 3; August 4, 1821, p. 3.

> that I get them, shall receive the above reward, with all reasonable expenses--Information may be given to the subscriber by directing letters to Moorsville, Limestone County, Alabama.
>
> ENOS C. TATE.[23]

The medium for runaway slave notices, the Illinois Gazette, was first known as the Illinois Emigrant and was first published December 26, 1818, by Henry Eddy and Singleton H. Kimmel. The weekly newspaper was printed on equipment which had been purchased in Pittsburgh and floated down the Ohio on a flatboat. A four-page, four-column sheet, the paper was renamed the Illinois Gazette September 25, 1819, and eight months later the partnership between Eddy and Kimmel was dissolved. A new one was formed between Eddy and James Hall, frontier author and lawyer, and continued until November 16, 1822, when the latter withdrew and was replaced by Charles Jones.

The content of the paper was varied, with two columns devoted to local news and editorials, and most of a page consumed by territorial laws. The printing of these laws was authorized in Washington, D. C., where Eddy and Kimmel secured this privilege with the help of Nathaniel Pope, Illinois territorial delegate to Congress.[24] Federal subsidization of territorial newspapers was approved March 27, 1804, in section two of "An Act to Provide for a More Extensive Distribution of the Laws of the United States," which empowered the secretary of state to publish federal laws in one newspaper in each of

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[23] Illinois Gazette, March 9, 1822, p. 1.

[24] Scott, 314. Buck, 172-73.

the territories.[25] The remainder of the Gazette's space was filled with foreign news, reprints of prose and poetry, and local literary contributions.[26] The following brilliant selection, "From the Clichandbord," was submitted to the newspaper by Adam McCool, Shawneetown's resident poet laureate:

> How different is /sic/ the minds of men,
> As different as their features are,
> As different as their dying end,
> And as the colour of their hair.
>
> Some men are of such a nature
> They'll think some man to be a god,
> And he is their interpreter,
> And rules them as with a rod.
>
> If any man says aught against him,
> Ev'ry one that can raise a note,
> They'll all rise, confus'd, against him,
> And willing for to cut his throat.
>
> These same men, so prone to evil,
> They're on extremes the other way,
> They have some man, the very devil,
> And wish him not a word to say.
>
> If any man shall speak of him,
> He's a rascal, they will all say,
> They are then ready for to crush him--
> No doubt but he's as good as they.
>
> I to all men am a friend,
> By my actions, you may see,
> In friendship, I my arm extend,
> And they may be, (if they please) a friend to me.[27]

The Illinois Gazette was a small, unprosperous enterprise. Advertising probably yielded between $800 and $1,700 annually, with

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[25] Peters, II, 302-03.

[26] Buck, 173.

[27] Illinois Gazette, May 12, 1821, p. 2.

federal printing accounting for perhaps $200 more. Circulation was once as high as 250, but not all subscribers were conscientious bill-payers, for, as printer William Orr said to Eddy, "The great majority of subscribers do not even dream of paying--their idea of 'taking the paper' is merely paying the postage." Because of this condition, subscription payments of $3 per year were often accepted in the form of commodities such as corn, salt, and venison.[28]

Despite its financial difficulties, the Illinois Gazette was a lively, vigorous publication under the ownership of Eddy and Kimmel, and the paper acquired a literary tone with Hall as editor. Unfortunately, the citizens of Shawneetown were more interested in protection against Indians and horse thieves than in the odes of a budding bard of the backwoods. Politically, Hall attempted to remain nonpartisan, but in 1820 he became entangled in the state constitutional convention controversy when he wrote an editorial asserting that Missouri and Kentucky were more likely to progress than other states because they permitted slavery. This action incurred the wrath of Hooper Warren, editor of The Edwardsville Spectator, who accused Hall of harboring proslavery sympathies. Hall replied that his opinions were being misinterpreted, and that he was

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[28] Randolph C. Randall, James Hall: Spokesman of the New West (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), pp. 96-97. Illinois Gazette, December 20, 1823, p. 3.

not a supporter of slavery in any way.[29] The Shawneetown editor also disavowed the proslavery attitude of Eddy, who, in running successfully for the State House of Representatives in 1820, favored limited slavery for the operation of the salines.[30]

Besides the bank and the newspaper, the chief private business in early Shawneetown was tavern and innkeeping. Probably the largest and most famous inn was the Rawlings House, a brick and frame building which boasted a kitchen, smokehouse, and two-tiered stable. In advertising for a renter, owner Moses Rawlings offered to supply the hotel with beef, corn, pork, hay, oats, milk cattle, two servants, a cook, a hostler, six featherbeds, and bedding.[31] Unfortunately, Rawlings' bountiful generosity to his renter was not equaled by his attention to interior decorating and public relations, if the observations of a Mrs. John Tillson are believed:

> The hotel made quite a commanding appearance from the river, towering as it did, among the twenty--more or less--log cabins and the three or four box-looking frames. One or two of these were occupied as stores; one was a doctor's office; a lawyer's shingle graced the corner of one; cakes and beer another. The hotel lost its significance, however, on entering its doors. The finish was of the cheapest kind, the plastering hanging loose from the walls, the floors carpetless, except with nature's carpeting--with that they were richly carpeted. The landlord was a whiskey keg in the

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[29] Esther Schultz, "James Hall in Shawneetown," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXII (October, 1929), 392-93.

[30] Randall, 93-94.

[31] Illinois Gazette, June 16, 1821, p. 3.

> morning and a keg of whiskey at night; stupid and gruff in the morning, by noon could talk politics and abuse Yankees, and by sundown was brave for a fight. His wife kept herself in the kitchen; his daughters, one married, and two single, performed the agreeable to strangers; the son-in-law putting on the airs of a gentleman, presided at the table, carving the pork, dishing out the cabbage, and talking big about his political friends. His wife, being his wife, he seemed to regard a notch above the other branches of the family, and had her at his right hand at the table where she sat with her long curls, and with the baby in her lap.[32]

An indication of the prices charged by Rawlings and other Shawneetown innkeepers is given by an undated schedule in the Gallatin County "Order Book A., 1813-1820":

Breakfast, dinner, and supper, each		.25
Loding [lodging]		.125
Horses to have fodder one night		.25
Oats or corn, per gal.		.125
Whiskey,	per 1/2 pint	.125
Cherry Bounce	do	.25
Peach brandy	do	.25
French brandy	do	.50
Rum	do	.375
Wine	do	.50
Gin	do	.25
Strong beer or porter	do	.25
Cider	per qt.	.125
Cider royal	do	.25
Small beer	do	.125[33]

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[32] Smith, I, 177-78.

[33] "Order Book A., 1813-1820," 8.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAILURE OF RELIGION AND BUSINESS

As indicated by Mrs. Tillson's description of Moses Rawlings and his hotel, Shawneetown was not a paragon of morality, for although religion influenced life in the settlement, the extent of its effect is doubtful. Among the first men of the cloth to visit the town were traveling missionaries. Samuel Mills and Daniel Smith, representatives of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, stopped in Shawneetown while en route to St. Louis in 1814, but they were unable to find a single Bible in the village and were told by one man that he had been searching for one for nearly fifteen years. He "had often applied at the stores in Shawneetown, to buy a Bible; but he could not find any. Sometimes he was contemptuously asked, What he wanted of a Bible?" The missionaries reported that the town was hardly abundant in goodness and virtue:

> Shawneetown is subject to be overflowed at highwater. But it is continually deluged like most other towns in the Territories, by a far worse flood of impiety and iniquity. Yet even here a faithful missionary might hope to be extensively useful. The people heard us with fixed and solemn attention when we addressed them.

The missionaries later sent fifty Bibles to Shawneetown, but apparently they, too, had little effect, as in 1816, a missionary

named Low also wrote that the townspeople needed religious guidance badly:

> Among . . . its [Shawneetown's] inhabitants not a single soul made any pretensions to religion. Their shocking profaneness was enough to make one afraid to walk the street; and those who on the Sabbath were not fighting and drinking at the tavern and grog shops, were either hunting in the woods or trading behind their counters.[1]

These reports are substantiated by John Mason Peck, a prominent Baptist minister, in the November, 1817, entry in his journal:

> I stepped into a grocery store where were assembled a number of wild fellows, swearing and blaspheming at a most horrid rate. I have seen enough of Shawneetown to justify what is reported of it as a most abandoned place. There are some decent, clever families; but I have conversed with none who seem decidedly religious. Tomorrow will show how the Sabbath is regarded. I never saw a place more destitute of religious instruction; and yet unless very prudent measures are pursued, little good can be expected to result.[2]

Occasionally the Illinois Gazette contributed to the religious crusade by publishing sermons; the following is the text of an exhortation on temperance entitled "A Short Sermon":

> 'And the Whale swallowed Jonah.'
> 'And Jonah was in the Whale's belly three days and three nights.'

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[1] Samuel J. Mills and Daniel Smith, Report of a Missionary Tour . . . (Andover: Flagg and Gould, 1815), pp. 13, 17, 47, 50. History of Gallatin, Saline, Hamilton, Franklin and Williamson Counties, Illinois, 95.

[2] Rufus Babcock, Forty Years of Pioneer Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck, D.D. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1864), p. 76.

My dear Readers, the whale which swallowed the recreant prophet of old, may be likened to the many monsters which swallow up the aberrant sinner of our own days.

When an individual becomes the slave of appetite and habits of intemperance; when the morning and the evening of his days are spent in wandering from one drinking establishment to another; plying the early julep, the stupifying antifogmatic [!] and the stimulating cocktail, may we not say the whale hath swallowed him up! [Italics author's.]

When one becomes so lost to all sentiments of decency, callous to all sense of shame, as to drown his faculties in the intoxicating bowl; and indulge in habits of drunkenness till he becomes a loathsome and disgusting object to his nearest and dearest friends; can we not, with the ancient writer, exclaim, he has been in the whale's belly at least three days and three nights! [Italics author's.]

When we see the young man hurrying along in the pursuit of pleasure; following the ideal phantom through every scene of dissipation; in mirth and revelry; in carousals and brothels--may we not say, the whale hath swallowed him up! [Italics author's.]

When an individual becomes the constant attendant on the gaming table; risks his fortune, the peace and happiness of his family, on the shuffle of a card, the throwing of the dice--can we not exclaim the whale hath swallowed him up! [Italics author's.]

When we see families of moderate fortune neglecting the prospects of economy to dash out in all the extravagancies of the times; aping their rich neighbours in dress, in furniture, and expensive living--may we not say, that they have all been swallowed up by the whale! [Italics author's.]

When we see the merchant neglect his counting room; entrust his business to agents and clerks, while he dashes away in his gig and curricle, drinks Champaigne at the Hotel, and mineral water at the Springs--may we not fear that the whale will swallow him up! [Italics author's.]

When we see the politician travelling through the country, haranguing the job at musters and gatherings, drinking whiskey at homespun dinners and making stump orations at barbecues [gig] may we not prophesy that, instead of office, he will find himself at the end, in the whale's belly! [Italics author's.]

> In fine, my readers, we may remark, by way of improvement, that the whales of this latter day are much more voracious than that of old, in as much as the whale which swallowed the prophet Jonah, cast him forth on the third day. But in our days, when a helpless mortal once gets within the jaws of the monster, he is lost forever; he is not so fortunate as to be vomited forth on dry land.[3]

Besides the residents, the itinerant boatmen helped give the town an unsavory reputation, as described by traveler John Woods in 1820:

> Many of the store-keepers were very obliging, but the boatmen the very reverse; a rough set of men, much given to drinking whiskey, fighting, and gouging, that is, they fight up and down, trying to put out each others [sic] eyes with their fingers and thumbs, and sometimes biting off each others [sic] noses or ears. A man, who resides near me, had the top of his nose bitten off, in one of these brutal frays, some years since. That is their common manner of fighting; but it is said that the neighbourhood is improving in buildings and manners.[4]

In the early 1820's the town probably had no more than 600 inhabitants and consisted of 80 to 100 buildings arranged on a single street parallel to the Ohio.[5] Shawneetown was far from civilized, but at a single meeting in 1822, the board of trustees passed numerous ordinances concerning order in the settlement. Recognizing the long-standing need for curtailment of violence, the trustees appointed a town constable with the following duties: destruction of all dogs running loose, suppression of riots and disturbances, enforcement of

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[3] Illinois Gazette, January 17, 1829, p. 4. In the column next to this sermon was an advertisement for a beer brewing process.

[4] John Woods, Two Years' Residence in the Settlement on the English Prairie in the Illinois Country, United States. . . . , reprinted in Vol. X of Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), p. 255.

[5] Randall, 89.

town ordinances, and collection of fines. The board also enacted a law which provided that anyone who discharged a firearm, excluding the town cannon, within 300 yards of any inhabited area of the village was to be fined not more than $10 nor less than $2. A person guilty of running horses through any street or alley was subject to a fine of not more than $3 and not less than $1 as set by the justice of the peace. Anybody who was intoxicated, used vulgar language, or disturbed the peace could be fined between $1 and $10 for each offense. A person who left obstructions on the sidewalks and streets, in front of houses and lots, or in alleys and prevented the passage of carts and wagons was to pay $1 for each offense and $1 for each day the obstruction remained. Sanitation was improved by regulations providing for the construction of sidewalks and the removal of dead animals from the streets; violators of the latter ordinance were to be fined $5. Although concerned about the town's welfare, the trustees must have been a grim quintet which did not tolerate any forerunners of P. T. Barnum, since the board also passed a law prohibiting the staging of any show and the exhibition of any oddity. The offender was to be fined $10 for the first showing and $5 for each day he continued his extravaganza.[6]

Although Shawneetown had problems concerning law and order in the 1820's, it had more serious economic difficulties. In 1823, the

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[6] Illinois Gazette, November 30, 1822, pp. 2-3.

Bank of Illinois suspended operations after failing to redeem its notes in specie, a scarce item in the wake of the depression of 1819-20. When dissolved, the bank was finally able to meet its private liabilities, but a balance of $28,367.85 owed to the federal government was not paid. Nevertheless, the institution maintained a facade of solvency until the conclusion of operations, for only a few days before suspension, the directors declared a dividend of 8 per cent.[7]

A second financial crisis ensued in 1825, when the Shawneetown branch of the First State Bank of Illinois closed its doors. This bank had been created by the General Assembly in 1821, with the principal institution in Vandalia and branches in Brownsville, Edwardsville, and Shawneetown. The third branch was liquidated after its incompetent managers loaned nearly all of its $84,685 capital to poor credit risks and allowed the bank's records to fall into disorder. Management was so shoddy that the cashier loaned $3,750 without security and was unable to account for another $4,800.[8] With this disastrous fiasco Shawneetown ceased to be an important financial center, and only when the Bank of Illinois was revived in 1835 did the town regain some banking prestige.

Shawneetown's economy received another blow when in February, 1822, the salt price fell from $1.25 to 50 cents per bushel because

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[7] Dowrie, 13-14, 21.

[8] Ibid., 27, 36. Pease, 59-60.

of the discovery of stronger, more productive salt deposits near Pomeroy, Ohio, and on the Kanawha River in Virginia. By May, the price had declined even further to thirty-seven and one-half cents per bushel.[9] In addition to decreasing market prices, the ailing salt industry suffered from increased production costs resulting from a scarcity of fuel and the complete prohibition of slavery in 1825. Because of these problems, sales of leases began occurring frequently in 1822, and partnerships in salt making were dissolved almost as often.[10]

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[9] Boggess, 171. Illinois Gazette, February 16, 1822, p. 3; May 25, 1822, p. 3.

[10] Illinois Gazette, January 19, 1822, p. 1; November 8, 1822, p. 4; February 8, 1823, p. 3; March 1, 1823, p. 3.

CHAPTER V

DISTINCTION AND OBLIVION

Although the year 1825 saw little improvement in the town's economy, it marked the final legal establishment of the settlement, for on January 10 the General Assembly approved "An Act Concerning the Town of Shawneetown," which incorporated the village and gave the trustees the same powers enumerated in the territorial law of December 8, 1814.[1] The year was also highlighted by the visit of the best-known personage to grace Shawneetown's early history--the Marquis de Lafayette, who visited the Ohio River settlement May 8, 1825, while on his last American journey.[2] The first step in the arrangements for

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[1] Laws Passed by the Fourth General Assembly of the State of Illinois, at Their First Session, Commenced at Vandalia, November 15, 1824, and Ended January 18, 1825 (Vandalia: Robert Blackwell & Co., 1825), pp. 75-79.

[2] A[ugust]e Levasseur, Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825; or, Journal of a Voyage to the United States, trans. John D. Godman (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1829), II, 158. Schultz ("Hall"), 398. Levasseur, Lafayette's secretary, gives the date of the visit as May 8, whereas Schultz states it was May 14. She is probably using the May 27, 1825, issue of the Vandalia Illinois Intelligencer as her authority; however, Levasseur says on page 166 of the second volume of his account that Lafayette was in Frankfort, Kentucky, May 14.

the visit were taken November 25, 1824, when the legislature adopted a resolution "that a joint committee of both houses be appointed whose duty it shall be to address General Lafayette expressive of the feelings of the people of the state of Illinois." The committee was composed of William S. Hamilton, Risdon Moore, Jr., and Conrad Will, representatives; and Theophilus W. Smith and Raphael Widen, senators. Governor Edward Coles also supported the resolution by writing to Lafayette in a letter of December 9, 1824:

> If you [Lafayette] should visit the Western States, you would derive a pleasure from witnessing the rapid improvements made by these children of the Revolutionary contest, & of that liberal & happy system of Government which emanated from it. It would be exceedingly gratifying to the Citizens of Illinois to be so honored. We should not be able to receive you in large & splendid cities, nor accommodate you in spacious mansions; but we flatter ourselves with the belief that you would be gratified in seeing our beautiful country, & would enjoy a parental interest in the promising prospects of our infant state. To this I will only add, if you visit us, I can furnish you a cordial welcome from gratified hearts; & none more so than your sincere & devoted friend.[3]

Upon arriving in Shawneetown, Lafayette was escorted from the boat landing to a reception in the Rawlings House, where he was greeted by James Hall (the text of the address delivered by Hall on the occasion is in Appendix II). Calico was spread over the ground between the dock and the hotel, and twenty-four guns saluted the

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[3]Greene and Alvord, 70-71.

mooring of Lafayette's steamboat, the Mechanic. Accompanying Lafayette were Governor Coles, Levasseur, George Washington Lafayette, the marquis's son; William Carroll, governor of Tennessee; and delegations from St. Louis and Kaskaskia. Lafayette remained in the town for a few hours, conversing with the residents, and then traveled east.[4] After the departure of Lafayette, the town relapsed into its drowsy decline, gradually becoming little more than a small, decaying Ohio River village.

As an example of frontier settlement, Shawneetown was both typical and unusual. Like many other American towns on the fringe of civilization, it had, at some time in its history, an informal government, a deficiency of "refined" culture, a bout of land fever, a lack of religious enthusiasm, and rapid changes in economic conditions. On the other hand, it was distinguished by a strange geographic location and natural and financial wealth. Ironically, these latter characteristics also account for Shawneetown's failure to evolve into a permanently prosperous, thriving community. Planted on the banks of the Ohio River, the town was an entrepot and a stopping-place for the tide of immigration from the South; however, it was subject to flooding, and few enjoyed the almost yearly submersions. Remarkably, the inundations did not destroy the town, and, as Morris Birkbeck, English traveler and reformer, wrote in his Notes on a Journey to America, Shawneetown became "a phenomenon evincing the

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[4] Ibid. Schultz ("Hall"), 398-99.

pertinacious adhesion of the human being to the spot where it has once fixed itself." Birkbeck also observed ornately that "as the lava of Mount Etna cannot dislodge this strange being from the cities which have been repeatedly ravaged by its eruptions, so the Ohio with its annual overflowings is unable to wash away the inhabitants of Shawneetown."[5] The economy, which attracted the few permanent inhabitants, was ephemeral, for eventually the village's proud banking institutions were washed away, not by water, but by unredeemed paper. Shawneetown's success in the salt trade was also transitory and much like the Cinderella tale; temporary mineral wealth made the settlement prosperous until the absence of a truly firm economic basis transformed the town into a pumpkin of declining fortunes.

As in 1817, Birkbeck's flowery statements are still true of Shawneetown, which is now in two parts: New Town, which was established on high ground after the Ohio River floods of 1937, and the original settlement, which is less secure behind a levee on the river. Old Town today is still deteriorating as it was in the 1820's, but yet the place retains some vestiges of its earlier greatness, such as the Marshall House and the nearby abandoned salt springs. Although of no current importance, these remnants serve as quaint reminders that Shawneetown, now moribund and neglected, was once a major frontier establishment.

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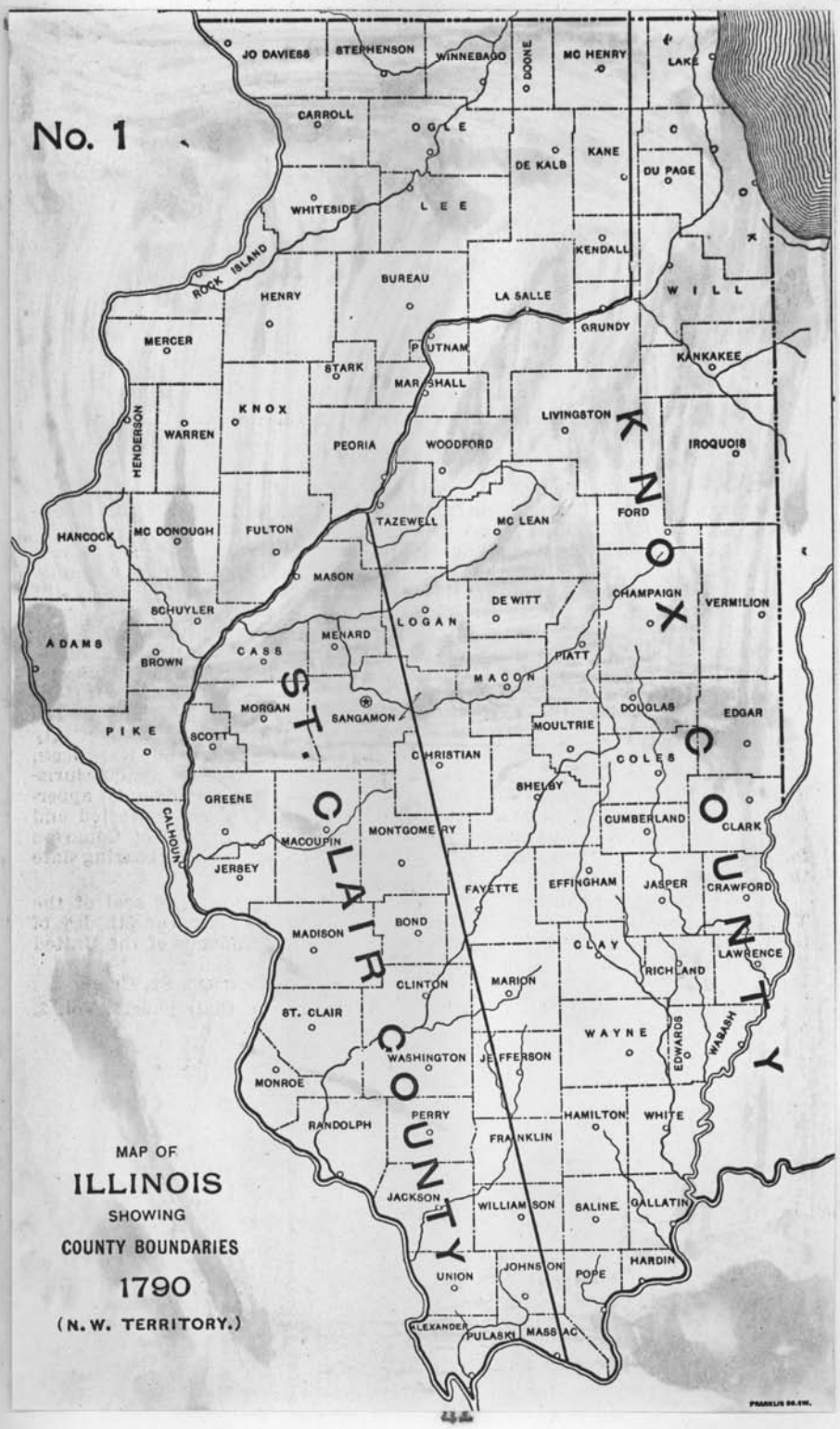
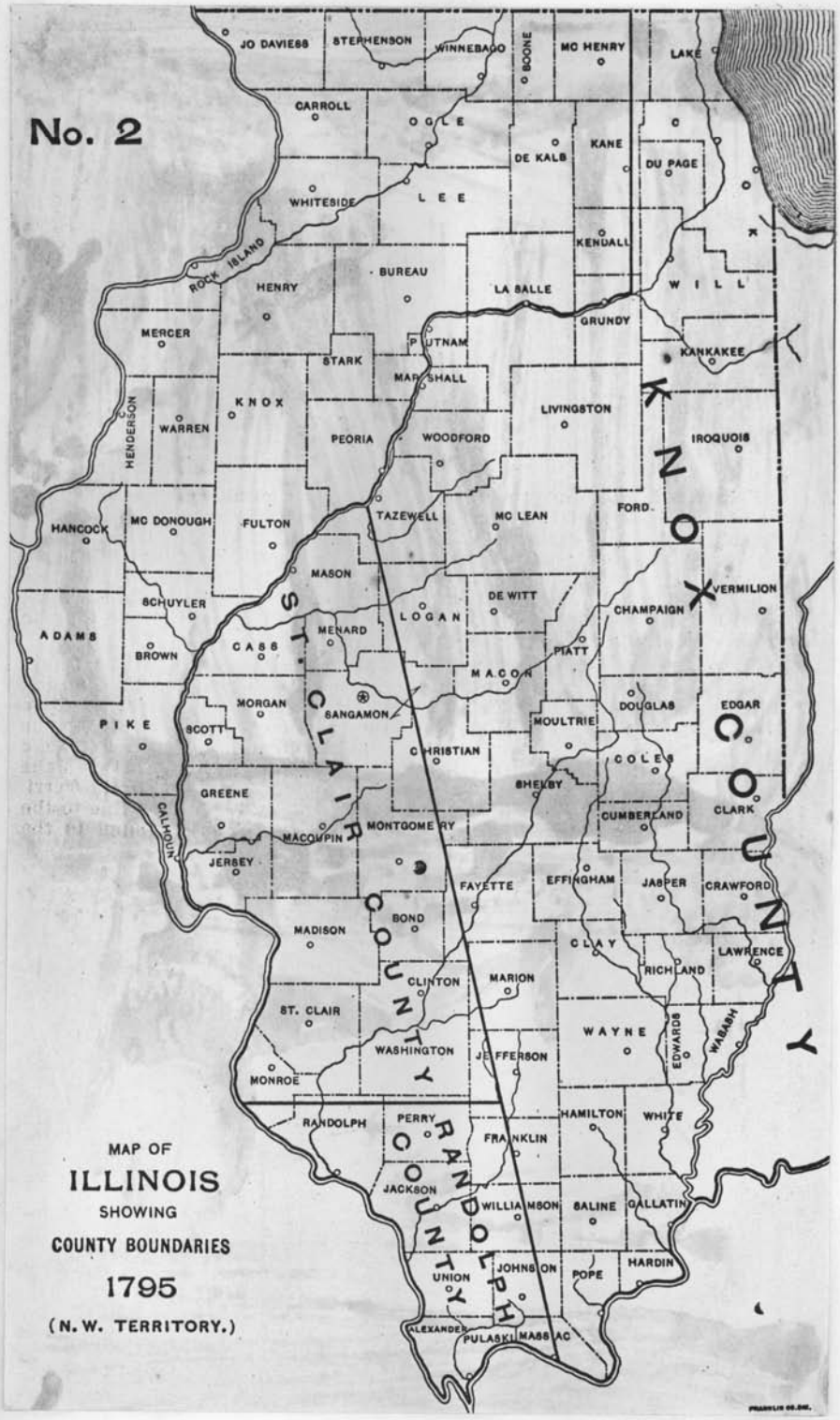
[5]Morris Birkbeck, Notes on a Journey in America, from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois (London: Ridgway and Sons, 1818), p. 113.

APPENDIX I

The following maps show the evolution of the Gallatin County area to the time of the county's creation September 14, 1812:




No. 2
JO DAVIESS
STEPHENSON
WINNEBAGO
BOONE
MC HENRY
LAKE
CARROLL
OGLE
DE KALB
KANE
DU PAGE
WHITESIDE
LEE
KENDALL
ROCK ISLAND
HENRY
BUREAU
LA SALLE
WILL
GRUNDY
MERCER
PUTNAM
KANKAKEE
STARK
MARSHALL
KNOX
LIVINGSTON
HENDERSON
WARREN
PEORIA
WOODFORD
IROQUOIS
FORD
HANCOCK
MC DONOUGH
FULTON
TAZEWELL
MC LEAN
VERMILION
MASON
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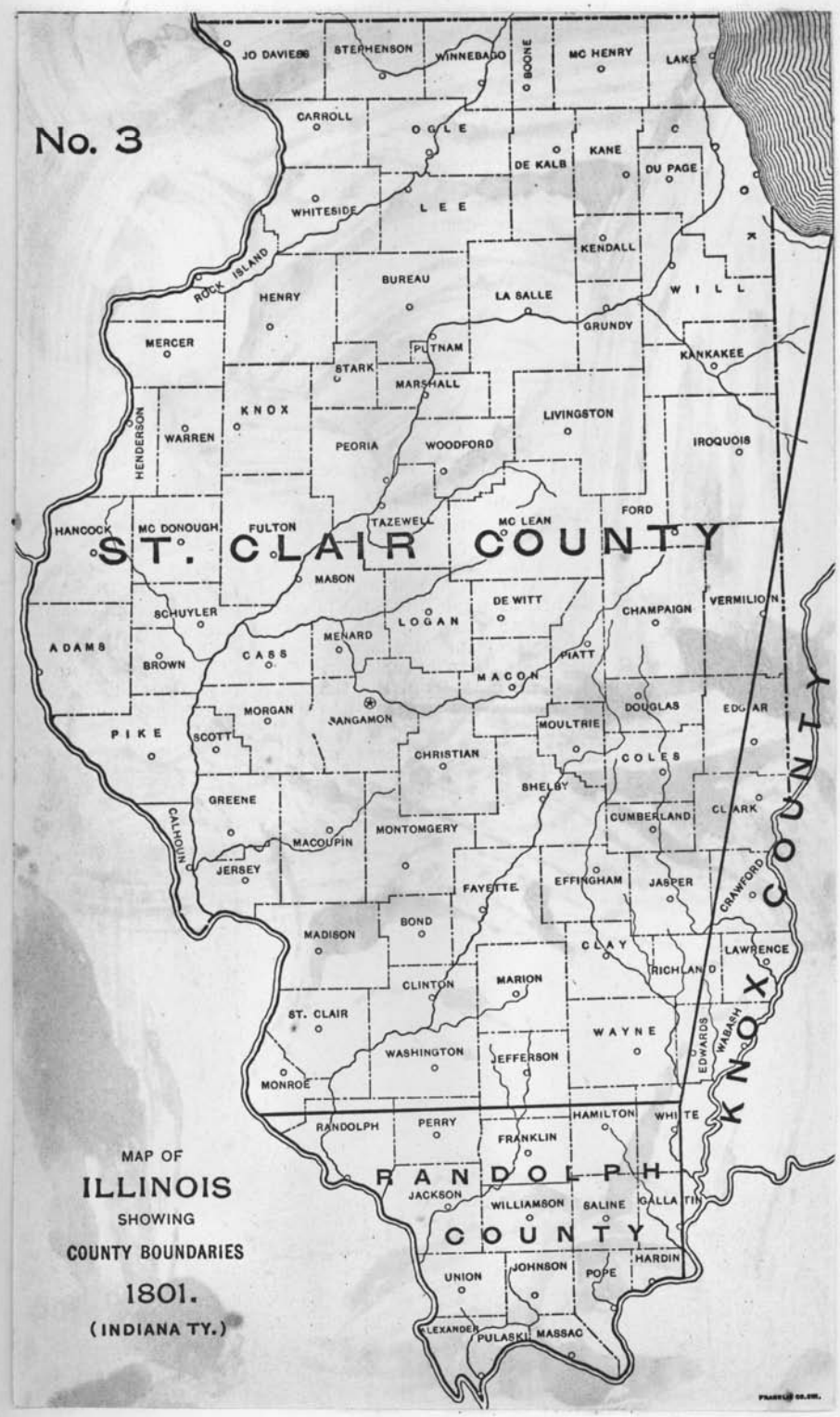
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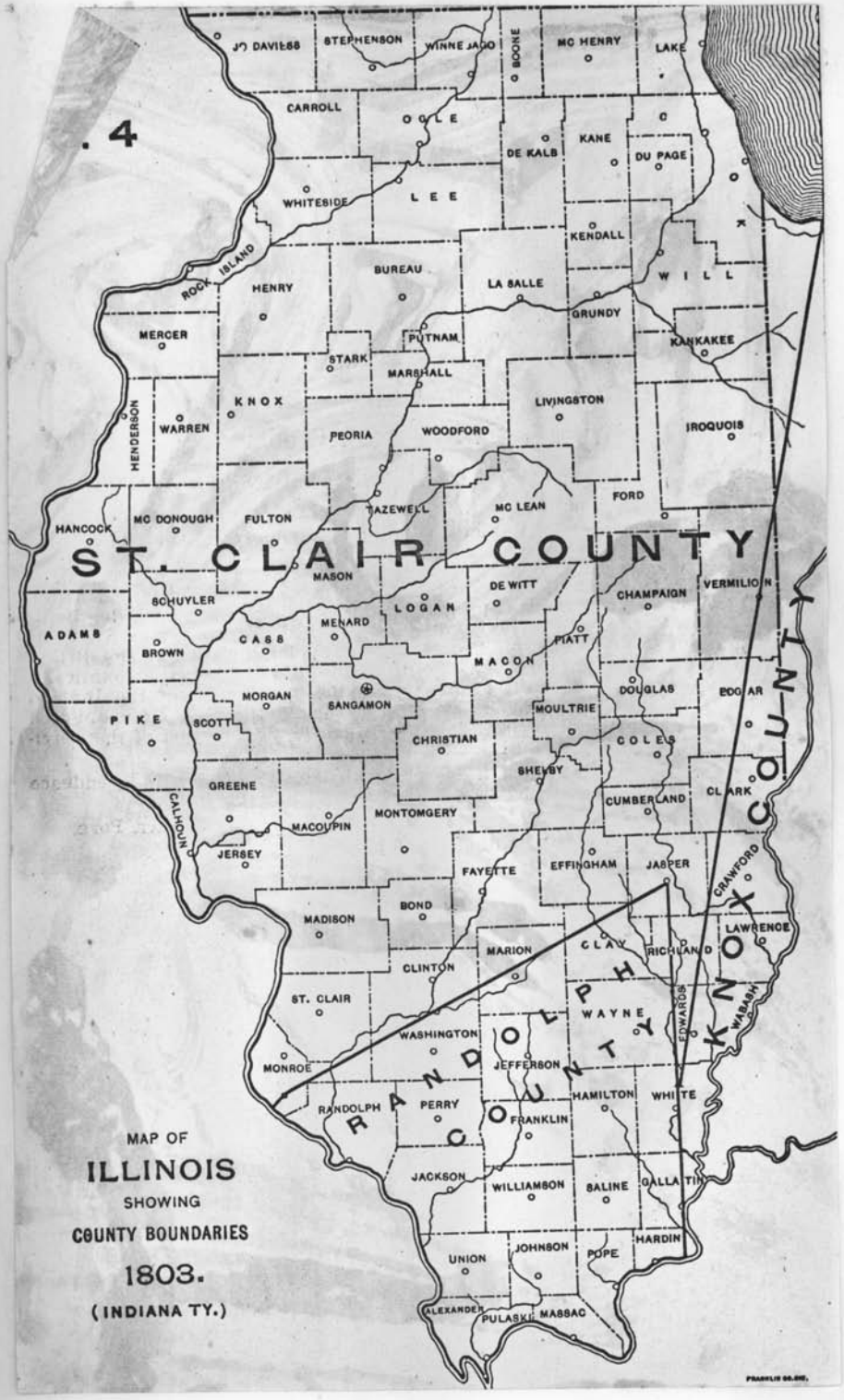
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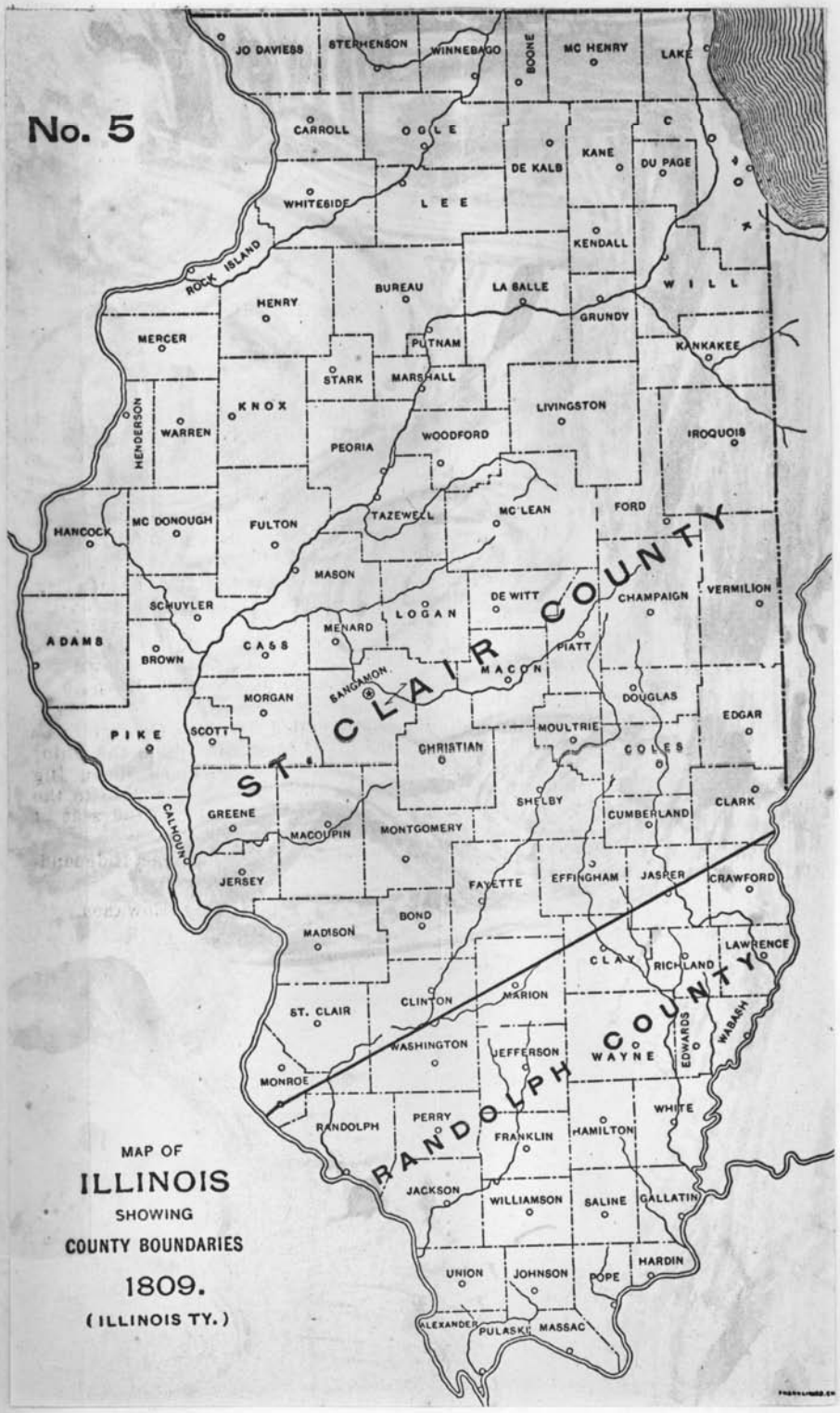
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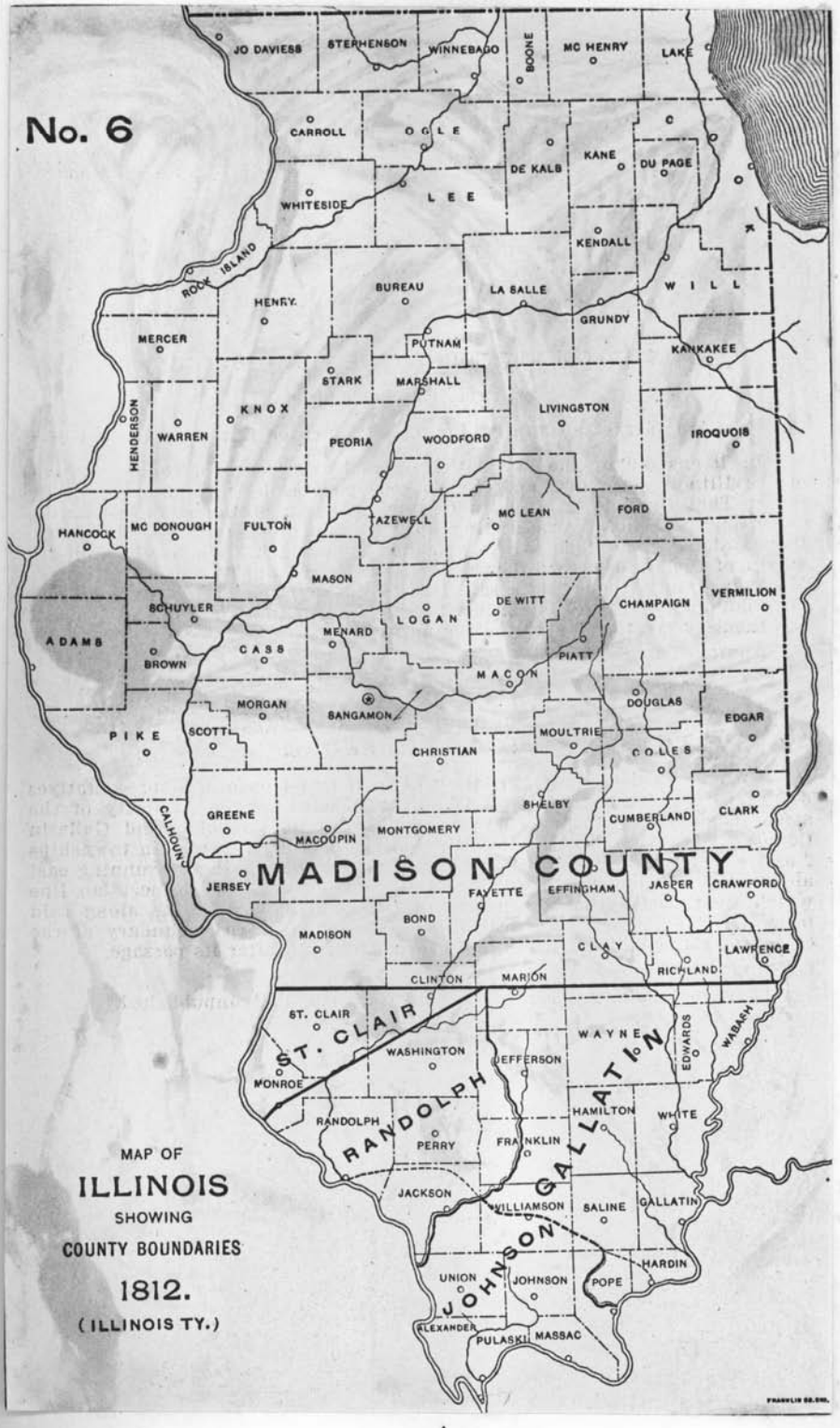
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APPENDIX II

The following is the text of James Hall's address delivered during the reception of the Marquis de Lafayette in Shawneetown:

> Sir:--The citizens of Shawneetown and its vicinity, avail themselves with infinite pleasure, of the opportunity which is this day presented to them, to discharge a small portion of the national debt of gratitude. The American people are under peculiar obligations to their early benefactors. In the history of governments, revolutions have not been unfrequent, nor have the struggles for liberty been few; but they have been too often incited by ambition, conducted by violence, and consummated by the sacrifice of the noblest feelings and the dearest rights. The separation of the American colonies from the mother country was impelled by the purest motives, it was effected by the most virtuous means, and its results have been enjoyed by wisdom and moderation.
>
> A noble magnanimity of purpose and of action, adorned our conflict for independence; no heartless cruelty marked the footsteps of our patriot warriors, no selfish ambition mingled in the councils of our patriot sages. To those great and good men we owe, as citizens, all that we are and all that we possess; to them we are indebted for our liberty--for the unsullied honor of our country--for the bright example which they have given to an admiring world.
>
> Years have rolled away since the accomplishment of those glorious events, and few of the illustrious actors remain to partake of our affection. We mourn our Hamilton--we have wept at the grave of our Washington; but Heaven has spared Lafayette to the prayers of a grateful people.
>
> In you, sir, we have the happiness of recognising one of those whom we venerate--the companion of those whom we deplore. We greet you as the benefactor of the living, we greet you as the compatriot of the dead. We receive you with filial affection as one of the fathers of the Republic. We embrace with eager delight an opportunity of speaking our sentiments to the early champion of our rights--but we want language to express

all we feel. How shall we thank thee who have so many claims upon our gratitude? What shall we call thee who have so many titles to our affection? Bound to us by a thousand fond recollections; connected with us by many endearing ties--we hail thee by every name which is dear to freeman. Lafayette--friend--father--fellow-citizen--patriot--soldier--philanthropist--we bid thee welcome. You were welcome, illustrious sir, when you came as our champion; you are thrice welcome as our honored guest. Welcome to our country and to our hearts--to our firesides and altars.

In your extensive tour through our territories, you have doubtless beheld many proofs that he who shared the storms of our infancy, has not been forgotten amid the genial beams of a more prosperous fortune. In every section of the union our people have been proud to affix the name of Lafayette to the soil, in fighting for which that name was rendered illustrious. This fact, we hope, affords some testimony that although the philosophic retirement in which you were secluded might shelter you from the political storms which assailed your natal soil, it could not conceal you from the affectionate solicitude of your adopted countrymen. Your visit to America has disseminated gladness throughout the continent, but it has not increased our veneration for your character, nor brightened the remembrance of those services which were already deeply engraven on our memories.

The little community which has the honor, today, of paying a small tribute to republican virtue, was not in existence at the period when that virtue was displayed in behalf of our country. You find us dwelling upon a spot which was then untrodden by the foot of civilised man; in the midst of forests whose silent echoes were not awakened by the tumults of that day. Around us are none of the monuments of departed despotism, nor any of the trophies of that valor which wrought the deliverance of our country. There is no sensible object here to recall your deeds to memory--but they dwell in our bosoms--they are imprinted upon monuments more durable than brass. We enjoy the fruits of your courage, the lesson of your example. We are the descendants of those who fought by your side--we have imbibed their love of freedom--we inherit their affection for Lafayette.

You find our state in its infancy, our country thinly populated, our people destitute of the luxuries and elegancies of life. In your reception we depart not from the domestic simplicity of a sequestered people. We erect no triumphal arches, we offer no exotic delicacies. We receive you to our humble dwellings, and our homely fare--we take you to our arms and our hearts.

The affections of the American people have followed you for a long series of years--they were with you at Brandywine, at York, at Olmutz, and at LaGrange--they have adhered to you through every vicissitude of fortune which has marked your virtuous career. Be assured, sir, that you still carry with you our best wishes--we fervently desire you all the happiness which the recollection of a well spent life, and the enjoyment of a venerable age, full of honor, can bestow--we pray, that health and prosperity may be your companions, when you shall be again separated from our embraces, to exchange the endearments of a people's love, for the softer joys of domestic affection, and that it may please heaven to preserve you many years to us, to your family, and to the world.[1]

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[1] "Address of Judge James Hall upon the Occasion of the Visit to Shawneetown of General Lafayette and His Party, May 14, 1825," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, July, 1925, pp. 363-66.

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